

Federal Credit Union. With over 67,000 members in northern New York, The Summit FCU has fostered many savings programs targeted to today's youth by teaching the importance of saving through targeted programs ranging from kindergarten through college. Mr. Vadala has worked hard to promote financial education programs and has armed his members with protecting themselves against identity theft.

Throughout his tenure as Chairman of the NAFCU Board of Directors, Mr. Vadala worked tirelessly to enhance the federal credit union charter by working with Congress for regulatory relief legislation for credit unions. As Chairman, he has also helped maintain NAFCU's status as a leading credit union trade association.

Mr. Vadala has proven himself to be a true gentleman. I have seen him walking the Halls of Congress many times carrying the torch for the credit union industry, and he has testified before this Congress on multiple occasions on issues important to credit unions.

Many would think that the work he does for credit unions would be enough to fill a day, but Mr. Vadala does much more. He is a dedicated family man as well. Mr. Vadala and his family have played a huge role in fundraising for the United Way in upstate New York. He was also the former Chairperson of the March of Dimes Walk America. His work with these organizations has made a huge impact on thousands of lives in New York and beyond. Also Mr. Speaker, I could not fail to mention that Mr. Vadala is one of the biggest Syracuse Orange fans I have ever had the privilege to meet; I would like to share one more "Go Orange" with Mr. Vadala as he concludes his time on the NAFCU Board.

I rise today to congratulate Mr. Mike Vadala on his fine work throughout his illustrious tenure as Chair of NAFCU. I have worked with him on issues that are important to the credit union community in the past and I am committed to continuing this relationship.

With more than 20 years experience in the credit union community, there is no doubt in my mind that our good friends at NAFCU will feel a great void once he steps down. Congratulations on your retirement from the NAFCU Board Mr. Vadala.

CONGRATULATING CURTIS SILER ON HIS LIFE SAVING ACTION

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 29, 2006

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Curtis Siler of Flower Mound, Texas, who rescued a drowning girl during a day trip to a local water park.

Twelve-year-old Curtis Siler and his mother, Tanya Siler, were spending the day at Hurricane Harbor, an Arlington, Texas water-based park. While swimming in the deeper end of the wave pool, Siler noticed a young girl resting on the bottom of the pool. He realized that her eyes had rolled back in her head and she was not moving. Without hesitation, Siler dove to the bottom, grabbed the girl, and brought her to the surface. He then called for the help of a lifeguard.

Thanks to the actions of Curtis Siler, lifeguards were able to get the girl to safety and begin first aid, ultimately saving her life.

I extend my sincere congratulations to young Curtis Siler for his heroic actions and true concern for the welfare of others. I admire his bravery during such a grave situation. He is truly an inspiration to us all. I am honored to represent Curtis and his family in Washington.

ARTICLE ON IMMIGRATION

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 29, 2006

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I would like bring to the attention of our colleagues in this House an opinion editorial (Baltimore Sun, May 11, 2006), written by my constituent Stephen Nordlinger, which I submit for the RECORD. Mr. Nordlinger is a former Washington correspondent for the Baltimore Sun.

Mr. Nordlinger's article highlights an issue that has received scant attention in the debate over immigration reform, namely the need to improve and streamline the process for legal immigrants to obtain a green card and eventually qualify for citizenship. Congress has never provided the funds to satisfactorily implement legislation passed in 2000 to ease the immigration process for those who entered the country legally. As a result, those who played by the rules find themselves waiting for years in a bureaucratic maze for their applications to be processed. This creates the perception that those who play by the rules get penalized. As we work to fix our broken system, we must provide the resources that are necessary to ensure that individuals like Mr. Veng Preap, who is the subject of this article, are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve.

[From the Baltimore Sun, May 11, 2006]

AN IMMIGRANT'S STORY

(By Stephen Nordlinger)

My wife and I first met Veng Preap on a sultry fall day when we walked into the offices of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on a busy street in the center of Siem Reap, near the Angkor Wat complex in Cambodia. We carried a letter from a friend of his in Washington and a pile of World Bank books on international development that Mr. Preap's friend suggested for him.

Veng Preap, not his real name to protect his privacy, took us everywhere to see the Angkor monuments and spent evenings speaking with us about his life and such subjects as civil engineering and Buddhism and his views toward organized religion. He showed us the large computer maps he had made as part of the effort by UNESCO to preserve the Angkor complex.

On our final day in Siem Reap, I spoke with Mr. Preap about coming to the United States. My wife and I were bowled over by his abilities, especially his rich English vocabulary, for someone who had never left Cambodia. We discussed sponsoring Mr. Preap for a year of study in his specialty, geographic information systems, a highly valued skill for producing computer-based maps. Less than a year later, he arrived at Towson University, its first Cambodian student.

He is still in this country nearly 10 years later, and his contribution to the United States has been substantial. He has seized opportunity after opportunity for public service.

His life here shows what a talented immigrant can contribute. But at the same time, his American experience is sending another clear message: how easily our government can overlook such a gifted person. It is a message that Congress should heed as it considers new immigration legislation.

Mr. Preap has been waiting on line five years and counting on government approval of the first step toward getting a green card to realize his dream of becoming a permanent resident and citizen. It is not the fault of government immigration workers. Congress never provided the funds to carry out legislation passed in 2000 that was intended to ease the immigration process for those like Mr. Preap who had entered the country legally, and there was a flood of applications.

Mr. Preap did not have to stay in this country beyond the original year we planned together. But how could such a hugely able person return to impoverished Cambodia, especially when a long-standing dispute between UNESCO and the corrupt authoritarian government had idled him for a year? The Khmer Rouge killed his mother and sister when he was 7. The current government allowed his wife's property to be stolen.

Mr. Preap considers himself an American even without the necessary documents. He relishes speaking English. While growing up in Cambodia, he pursued his desire to learn English often by studying alone and by candlelight for fear of being arrested or worse because such studies were banned. At Towson, he insisted on living in a dormitory with American students rather than in an international enclave.

Over the past few years, he has earned a second bachelor's degree in geography at Towson and a master's in computer science at Strayer University. He has volunteered for more than 6 years to teach computers to poor Americans and foreigners. He worked for the Voice of America broadcasting to Cambodia. He helped film a documentary on the tsunami disaster. And he helped prepare a giant map for the rotunda at the National Museum of American History showing the various kinds of voting machinery in the nation's election districts.

All the while, he has paid taxes on his limited income.

Mr. Preap is a skilled computer teacher. The community center where he volunteers has asked him to come two nights a week because it cannot find teachers with his ability. The Internet runs job offers for his skill in geographic information systems.

People speak in the abstract about immigration, and much of the discussion is about the need for more farm and restaurant workers. But here is an example of a hugely talented, hard-working immigrant being needlessly thwarted by our government. Mr. Preap cannot take a job and settle down because our immigration system won't let him.

Not only are we not taking full advantage of skilled talent among the immigrants, but we may be on the verge of causing more disappointments, by the millions. The huge number of immigrants who have come out of the shadows to demonstrate for the right to become citizens may find a long, long waiting line. The system is just too cumbersome and underfunded.

Unless the Bush administration and Congress provide new resources, it is all too likely that broken borders will be replaced by broken promises.